

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2004

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to express our deep concern about recent reports of a shift in U.S. policy toward Sudan. According to media accounts, the United States is proposing to reward the Government of Sudan with debt relief and reconstruction funds if it will agree to sign a final peace deal with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). This measure represents a major shift in our Sudan policy. In September 2004, Secretary of State Powell accused the Government of Sudan of committing genocide in Darfur and the Administration pushed for two United Nations Security Council resolutions, threatening sanctions against the Government of Sudan. We believe strongly that we must hold the Government of Sudan accountable for its participation in genocide in Darfur through pressure and punishment, not through rewards.

Mr. President, we are grateful for your strong leadership and interest in bringing about a just peace in Sudan. The Administration's decision to declare genocide in Darfur, after carefully documenting the atrocities, should be applauded. Exactly ten years ago, our government failed the people of Rwanda and did not call the crimes in Rwanda by their rightful name: genocide. We did the right thing in Darfur--we spoke the truth, despite considerable indifference by members of the international community. But we have done little to follow through on our declaration of genocide in Darfur. In fact, if press accounts are true, we might be rewarding the Government of Sudan for committing genocide. We are sure that you agree with us, Mr. President, that inaction in the face of genocide could set a terrible precedent for the future. Governments and brutal dictators around the globe may see inaction as a blank check for genocide.

For more than a decade, we have worked for a just peace in Sudan. We accepted the IGAD-led peace process as the only viable option, despite our uncertainty about the Government of Sudan's commitment to a just peace. We want to see a settlement to this long-standing conflict. But what price are we willing to pay for peace? Should we turn a blind eye to the abuses and crimes in Darfur to secure a peace agreement with the South that may or may not be honored by a government responsible for genocide? We are hopeful and eager about this week's United Nations Security Council session on the crisis in Sudan in Nairobi, Kenya.

In less than 20 months, more than 70,000 people have been brutally murdered, 1.6 million people have been displaced, and an estimated 200,000 people have been forced to flee their country. Yet the international community has done very little to protect even those that have been displaced by this conflict. In fact, the same government accused of these atrocities continues to bomb, maim, rape and kill innocent civilians--even in camps for the displaced. According to an article in The Washington Post on November 10, 2004, "Just hours after the government agreed to a peace deal Tuesday aimed at ending violence in Darfur, Sudanese police arrived at this battered camp in the middle of the night,